



Terms of Reference

Background

Sex and gender¹ differences and similarities in research are often overlooked in research design, conduct and reporting, as well as in general science communication. This oversight may lead to suboptimal research and can result in less evidence-based practices and interventions, in particular for women.

Journal editors serve as gatekeepers of science. Editors and publishers can play an important role in setting standards of reporting and can promote reporting of data disaggregated by sex as a matter of routine. By encouraging researchers to provide sex/gender-specific data, journal editors are not only encouraging better research design, but also contributing to increased awareness of appropriate gender analysis in research, when and where relevant and necessary.

As an international association, the European Association of Science Editors (EASE) has recognized the need to advocate widespread adoption of gender policies in scientific journals. EASE is well positioned to advocate for gender mainstreaming² in editorial policies and can spearhead efforts to address this important issue.

The EASE Council decided in October 2012 to establish a Gender Policy Committee (GPC) to promote gender balance in scientific publishing work and inspire better and consistent provision of sex/gender-specific data published in scientific journals. These terms of reference set out the GPC mission, vision and strategy as well as the roles and responsibilities of its members.

Mission of the GPC

- Advance sex/gender reporting and gender diversity in editorial management on a global level, and across disciplines. Addressing the gender gap in scientific research and publishing is a pre-requisite for enhanced quality, diversity and transparency and will allow science (across disciplines) to remain at the forefront of innovation and discovery.

Vision of the GPC

- Greater gender diversity in science and publishing practices for enhanced quality, diversity and transparency for science to remain at the forefront of innovation.

¹ **Sex** is a multidimensional biological construct that encompasses anatomy, physiology, genes and hormones; **gender** is a multidimensional social construct that is culturally based and historically specific, and thus constantly changing (see Johnson *et al*, "Better science with sex and gender: Facilitating the use of a sex and gender-based analysis in health research," 2009).

² **Gender mainstreaming** refers to the goal of identifying where gender difference exists and providing balance when needed. Definition also from Monash University: www.med.monash.edu.au/gendermed/mainstreaming.html

Goals of the GPC

- Advocate editors to take responsibility for gender sensitive reporting in science publications through endorsement and implementation of SAGER – Sex and Gender Equity in Research – guidelines.
- Devise and promote means for editors to monitor the impact of implementing SAGER.
- Provide guidance and tools to publishers and commercial software providers to implement necessary changes in editorial management software to facilitate and encourage better gender-sensitive reporting.
- Strive for editors, publishers, and other governing bodies in scientific publishing to ensure a gender balance in editorial boards and editorial management teams at all levels.
- Encourage journal editors to improve the gender balance among the peer reviewer pool and support by providing training resources, e.g. through the EASE Peer Review Toolkit.
- Raise awareness among authors and scientists about the importance of sex/gender in science, and share evidence on how inclusion of sex/gender considerations in science and its reporting can enhance science quality and spur innovation.

Structure of the GPC

1. **The Executive Committee:** governing body of the Gender Policy Committee, in charge of the overall strategic direction and operational oversight of the work towards agreed objectives in line with EASE GPC and EASE mission and vision.
 2. **Working groups**
 3. **EASE Gender Policy community**
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Membership & Term

Executive Committee

To consist of a minimum of five and a maximum of seven members. In addition, there will be an ex officio member of the Council to enhance communication with and reporting to the EASE Council. Executive Committee members are EASE members, professionals with diverse backgrounds in research, science communication and editing, and have a common interest in addressing gender disparities in the field of scientific publishing and science communication. The Executive Committee will be co-chaired by two members, having a female and a male co-chair would be highly desirable. GPC strives to maintain a gender balance and diverse Executive Committee.

Members of the Executive Committee commit for a period of three years, which can be extended provided that the member participates actively in Executive Committee activities. Members can serve for a maximum four terms in the Executive Committee. Members who have been inactive for a period of one year (e.g., no participation in meetings or conference calls, no response to email requests, and no other form of engagement with the Executive Committee) may be contacted by the chairs to confirm their continued desire to participate in the Executive Committee. Since membership is voluntary, members may discontinue their membership at any time by providing notice to the co-chairs.

The EASE GPC is an official committee of EASE. The EASE Council appoints the co-chairs. The term of the co-chairs can be extended by the Council upon satisfactory participation and demonstrated leadership. The co-chairs can serve for a maximum of three terms.

Individuals interested to nominate themselves or others are welcome to submit a letter of expression interest to the Executive Committee co-chairs, indicating their motivation and qualifications in contributing to the work of the GPC. Membership applications will be solicited and considered based on available seats in the Executive Committee or other working groups. The co-chairs will consult with the Executive Committee and preferably select members by consensus, ensuring gender balance, as well as diversity with regard to areas of expertise and geographical affiliation and representation. Executive Committee members can also be co-ordinators of working groups.

Working groups

The GPC working group should consist of a minimum of five members with diverse backgrounds in research, science communication and editing, and have a common interest in proactively addressing gender disparities in the field of scientific publishing and science communication. Their subject matter expertise/professional background should be related to the topic of the working group and/or help to advance it. One coordinator of the working group should be responsible for liaising with the Executive Committee.

Members of the EASE GPC working group commit to a period of 3 years, which can be extended provided that the member participates actively in working group activities, and deliver on agreed commitments. There is no limitation to years of participation. Members who have been inactive for a period of one year (e.g., no participation in meetings or conference calls, no response to email requests, and no other form of engagement with the working group) may be contacted by the coordinator to confirm their continued desire to participate in the working group. Since membership is voluntary, members may discontinue their membership at any time by providing notice to the coordinator.

Working groups are affiliated with the EASE GPC. The coordinator as well as at least half of the members in the working group should be EASE members. GPC Executive Committee formally nominates/endorsees the coordinator for a period of 3 years. The coordinator's term may be extended upon satisfactory delivery and demonstrated leadership. Given that working groups are project-based it is expected that they would not last longer than two terms of 3 years.

The GPC Executive Committee will establish working groups based on identified strategic needs, and appoint coordinators who can identify activities and priorities, based on the strategic objective of the WG. Individuals are welcome to propose working groups that fall within the scope of the GPC or express interest to coordinate a working group. Individuals interested in joining a working group should express their interest to the coordinator. Membership will be considered based on expertise as well as gender and regional diversity in the working group. The coordinator will consult with working group members and new members will be selected by consensus.

GPC Community

The GPC Community is envisaged as an open forum of interested individuals and groups working in areas within or related to the scope of the GPC. They may be loosely associated with the GPC and its working groups and act as ambassadors of the GPC mission and vision, championing the aims and activities of the GPC in their own organisations, at conferences, through social media, etc.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Committee

- Develops the strategic framework of the GPC and ensures a lean and effective operation.
- Identifies the priorities of the GPC work for a three-year period.
- Establishes a limited number of working groups in line with the identified priorities to implement the strategy; defines the scope and goals of these groups.
- Appoints working group coordinator and ensures a regular communication between working groups and Executive Committee.
- Supports the working group co-chairs and work with them towards the agreed goals.
- Monitors and evaluates the progress by the GPC at large towards the implementation of agreed action plans and deliverables, and goals.

Co-chairs are expected to

- ensure that regular conference calls and meetings occur as required;
- develop and distribute the agenda and background material for Executive Committee meetings at least two weeks before the call/meetings, chair the calls and meetings, and arrange for minutes to be taken;
- distribute minutes in a timely fashion and ensure follow up on action points;

- handle any general enquiries about GPC by EASE members;
- secure endorsement of activities by Council;
- monitor opportunities for funding, collaboration or promotion of GPC activities;
- ensure the Executive Committee actively pursues GPC goals, mission and vision

GPC council liaison

- Represents the GPC on the EASE Council, and serves as a channel of communication between GPC and the Council.
- Liaises with other (selected) EASE/groups committees to identify and ensure synergies.
- Serves as an advisor to ensure GPC activities are in line with values and mission of EASE.

Working groups

- Develop an action plan with key deliverables/milestones to meet the objectives set for the group by the Executive Committee.
- Obtain approval of the action plan from the Executive Committee
- Manage the group to meet the objectives and report on progress to the Executive Committee.

Working group coordinators will

- liaise with GPC Executive Committee and report on activities progress on a regular basis;
- ensure endorsement by GPC Executive Committee of 3-year plan (incl. structure, deliverables and milestones);
- proactively recruit, retain and engage working group members;
- establish sub-groups where appropriate;
- follow up on and ensure delivery of agreed outputs/milestones;
- ensure that conference calls and meetings occur as required;
- develop the agenda for meetings, chair them and arrange for minutes to be taken and distributed.

Time Commitment

Executive Committee:

The Executive Committee will convene a minimum of three conference calls per year. The Executive Committee will further communicate via email in-between teleconferences. The Executive Committee will convene a face-to-face meeting in conjunction with the EASE Conference. Members commit to actively engage in the discussions and to provide timely input and feedback. A quorum of members must be present before a conference call or a meeting can proceed. A quorum consists of half the total membership plus one. It is the responsibility of the members to attend or send regrets for Executive Committee meetings, and to review materials prior to the meetings. For agenda items that require voting, votes may be submitted via email and a simple majority (over 50%) of attending members is needed to pass a motion. In the case of a tied vote, the chairs hold a deciding vote.

Minutes will be distributed to all EC members for approval by email prior to the next meeting. Once approved, minutes will be shared with the EASE Council.

Reporting

The ex officio member of the Executive Committee, who is member of the EASE Council, is responsible for regular reporting of GPC activities to the EASE Council, and providing feedback from the Council to the GPC Executive Committee. The President or Executive Committee will be responsible for reporting GPC activities at the EASE annual general meeting.

Resources

The EASE Secretariat provides limited administrative support.

Remuneration

Gender Policy Committee, its Executive Committee, working groups and other membership is voluntary and is not remunerated. Members are expected to cover any relevant costs.

Revision of the Terms of Reference

The ToR will be developed by the GPC Executive Committee and approved by the EASE Council. It is subject to revision on an annual basis, but may also be revised when deemed necessary.

Date of Approval/Last Review

12 December 2012, Revised 6 August 2016, May 26, 2017, **Revised 12 January 2020**